Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month 2022: Xbox Ambassadors Share Their Stories

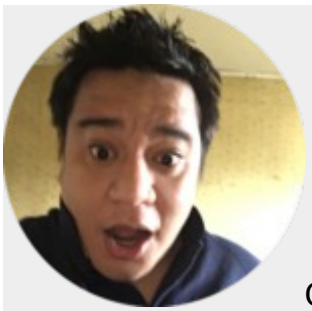
Community Fifthpaw May 2, 2022

Today marks the start of Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month! The Xbox Ambassadors program has always been about amplifying and highlighting voices within our awesome community. So, in celebration, we asked those who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander how games with API representation have impacted them and to share their own stories about being a member of a gaming community.

We received hundreds of responses and, with much consideration, selected the following to share.

Here are their stories in their own words. If you would like to hear some submitters reading their own stories, head on over to our YouTube channel!

gusdafa



Growing up in Samoa, I was fortunate enough to have a NES where playing games was so much of my childhood. I learned more about the NFL from Tecmo Super Bowl than watching football games, also because we did not have the games broadcasted here. Halo on the OG Xbox- like it was for millions of other gamers- was a surreal experience too. The music and gameplay memories still invoke that euphoric sensation when you encounter it, even to this day. It was one of the best parts of my life growing up.

From having my friends in the neighborhood play NES and SNES in the early 90s, to the LAN parties for Starcraft, Warcraft and AoE, the split TV screens for Halo and CoD, to today's fully fledged communities in Xbox clubs and Discord channels, SM groups, gaming has connected me to so many wonderful people and new friends. It has even led to me following some creators, sharing their experiences on livestreams and having conversations about the current game metas and more. It is a social community that helps you feel less isolated. That is a guarantee from someone living on a small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Mrdeadman22

So, when I first started playing Xbox, one of the first games I played was Blue Dragon made by Microsoft as an Xbox exclusive. It's not a well-known game, but it's still one of my favorite games 15 years later. It's made in Japan so I'm assuming that the in-game characters are of Japanese descent. It was first introduced to me by my brother and dad. It was a game that we would play together, taking turns controlling the characters. We would always have fun with it and that's what got me into playing games and being an Xbox user for life.

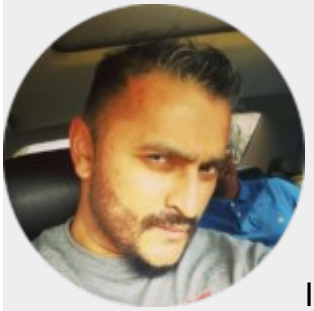
As I grew, I started to play other games like online games. My first online game was Call of Duty: World at War. When I started playing, I was scared

others online would not like playing me because of my higher pitch voice. To my surprise though, the people of the online world were fine with it. The first zombies match I played was where I made my first friend, he was about the same age as me at the time and we got along great with each other. I played World at War for 2-3 years before moving on to various Call of Duty games, GTA Games and then Minecraft. I also played Fortnite in between all of this.

I met a lot of friends through the years with my same kind caring personality. The game I currently play the most is Blue Dragon and Rainbow Six Siege. Siege was a game introduced to me by my good friend who taught me how to play the game. Even though I'm not that good at the game, I still made friends, a few of them I became best friends with and still play with them. Had I not been introduced to Blue Dragon by my brother and dad, who knows whether or not I would have made the friends I have today.

The gaming communities that I've been into throughout the years have been good and bad. There was one I was a part of that really showed me how to be nice and sportsmanlike while playing. The way I learned that is I was once in a group called Commanders for Call of Duty: Modern Warfare and it was one I did not stay in because of the way they acted. We would all always fight and complain about each other rather than working together to resolve our issues and improving each other. However, when I left the Commanders and joined another group called The Demons, they were- despite the name- a nice caring group of people. They helped me get out of my habit of being a rude stuck-up person and being good sportsman. Had it not been for The Demons I would probably not be a good sportsman today.

MakgSnake



It's very hard to find games with Asian or South Asian characters, but I am really glad things are changing and we are getting more diversity. Playing Far Cry 4 and hearing Hindi took me by surprise, and I loved it. Playing Raji on Xbox One really made me feel that we are getting there even more than ever before. There's so much to tell and so many ways to express that I am just looking forward to what we have in store.

Lots of different gaming communities have impacted my experience as a gamer. Seeing characters from the LGBT community in games make me so happy as well. Female leads always put a smile on my face and when the character is Asian, there's even more happiness on my face.

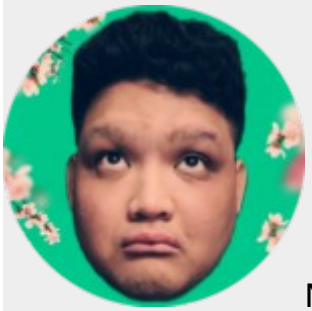
Cybertroy

Raji was a good representation of Hindu culture, made by the guys in Pune, Maharashtra. It has been a hot minute since I saw cultural or religious references to Hinduism in games, so it was a breath of fresh air to see one, and a product from an Indian studio to boot gives the writing some credibility. I had it bookmarked on XGP and did play it on a friend’s PC while we were hanging out and was amazed at how Mahabalasur was chosen as the antagonist.

I get a good chunk of my gaming updates either via social platforms or chat apps, say Discord, through some friends I have made over the years. That translates to me getting excited for a hot new release to dive into after work. When I was serving during the last 2 years of the pandemic (I am an RMO), I was looking forward to getting back home, to maybe tune in for 15 mins for some Halo match, or simply progress some questline, or practice the combat in DMC.

And when I couldn’t for obvious reasons, the community, with all its energy, would remind me of what the world is; as a doctor, you cherish moments like these, the ones where you hear others having a great time, discussing trends which I simply miss out on, the excitement. Gives me hope. The lobby system/grouping is great, if you guys aren’t aware of it already.

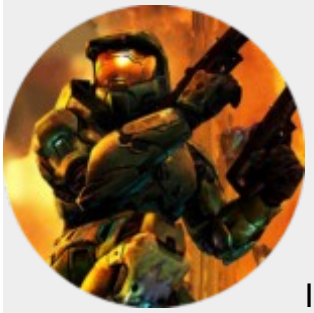
JoshTalk



Not many games represent myself. I’d always find the nearest Asian-passing or related character and play as them. For the few games that do represent me and my culture, I always felt more connected and proud to play as someone who I could relate to. As a Filipino-American, representation really matters to me. It fills my heart with joy to see the time spent to ensure that we are also represented in the game community and I’m always on the lookout for it.

Gaming communities have impacted me both negatively and positively. There are trolls and people who lack integrity, but those communities that really show love are the ones I stick around for. They make you forget that there are bullies and over-edgy people. It really means a lot to have found these people and to have played with them. Games are more fun with other people.

Caution0083



I personally love the concept of Kamala Khan as superhero in Marvel's Avengers. It was a great way to introduce a character from my background who was an easily relatable persona. I enjoyed the game very much with the action and multiple characters switching as you progressed in the story. My personal favorite game is still Halo. I will always love that series and continue supporting it. As of late, the new Halo series has multiple Asian characters and that's great to see. The future is bright and inclusive.

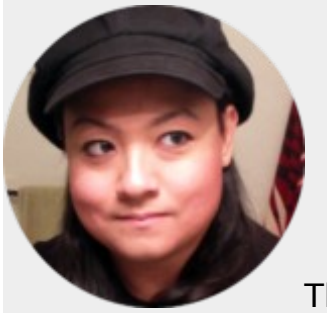
I never had any concerns for bullying online. I play games to have fun and like-minded individuals always find each other online and in real life. My personal favorite online games are Halo and the NBA 2K games. I prefer co-op titles overall where players can come together for a common goal and not just run and gun online like war zone. Although, that is still mindless fun!

bangoMANGO91

In regards to Pacific Islanders, I'd love to see more Hawaiian and Polynesian representation within gaming titles. I have come across many developers but seldom games with Polynesian people or locations. I enjoyed seeing Alola in Pokémon being a slight representation of what I believe to be the Hawaiian islands, but would love to see more of that within future games with Hawaii being in-game, like Tokyo in Ghostwire Tokyo.

Growing up on Oahu, community is not only a large part in how I was raised, but also an important part of our culture. Therefore, as a gamer, community is probably the biggest reason I choose to game on Xbox. I have found friends from different islands and around the world, even created a Hawaii-based Xbox podcast called Talk Story Podcast to represent Pacific Islanders within the gaming space. Gaming is fun but always better with a solid community and I'm grateful for each one of them! Shoutout to 3cDraco, USOVINNY, BL1NDG1ANT808, TO0BIG, SpeedAngel808, Ky_Burgs and SENSEI808!!

EternityInBlack



There's a not a lot of Filipinos in video games compared to other Asian cultures so whenever I encounter them, it's a genuine surprise! The first Filipino video game character I saw was Maria Santos, from a Japanese-only visual novel called Sampaguita. I used a crude translation guide to get through it, but I was doubly surprised to find out that part of the game was set in the Philippines!

Later I encountered Talim in Soul Calibur 2 and recalled being in sheer disbelief! I said to myself, "Surely the developers know what the name means, right?" Talim means 'sharp' in Filipino, which makes sense since Soul Calibur's a fighting game all about weaponry!

I think representation is really important in games! It helps younger folks identify certain traits and values unique to their own heritage and inspires them to do incredible things!

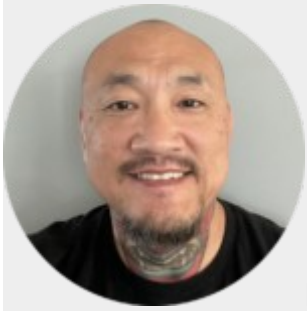
Gaming communities are also really important to me. As someone who identifies as gender fluid and Filipino, it's very important to be able share experiences with others and, of course, enjoy games together! I believe that apart from our different cultures, spoken languages, and heritage, we're all gamers, and we can use that identifying factor to bring us all together, no matter who or where we're from!

endlightend

It’s awesome to see a character that looks like you and to feel proud when your culture is represented, like Wei Shen in Sleeping Dogs and the streets of Hong Kong. Other times, playing an Asian character like Morgan Yu in Prey or Faith in Mirror’s Edge just reminds me that I am seen, even in a fictitious landscape, and transports me to that place of feeling like ‘I’ can be a superhero instead of feeling like I’m playing as someone else.

Gaming has always connected me with people I don’t get to see very often, or brand-new people from different parts of the country and the world. Whether it be sharing a lobby in an online game or chatting about an awesome moment in a single player game, gaming feels universal and helps me connect with others who share the same passion that I do.

Jimjitsujax



My earliest memories of playing games with Asian characters was Street Fighter. I am old enough to remember the coin operated arcade machines. I used to ride my bike to the local 7/11 and save my quarters to play Ryu, Chun Li, and E. Honda. It is one of my favorite memories as a child in the 80s.

Gaming communities have impacted me more than most others because the communities have literally saved my life. After doing tours in Iraq and Afghanistan I came back with some pretty serious mental and physical deficits. It was suggested by my PT doctor to try video games as a way to get some dexterity back in my hands.

I started with Destiny and met a lot of great people along the way. Sadly, I found myself in a very dark place mentally and they were there for me in my time of need. They would check on me and call me and yell at me to get online and play with them to get my mind on something else. I can say that the community quite literally saved my life. I haven’t looked back since and I

now do what I can to help prevent Veteran suicides using video games as a way to connect. #Mission22

Thank you to all submitters once again for their wonderful stories. And thank YOU for reading them.